

## THE BUILDER,

No. 322.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 1845.

SING or swim, we must sail in the boat of truth, neither concealing our colours, nor carrying false ones. We have all to gain by the truth, at least all that we care to gain—we put our whole and absolute trust in it, and for such purposes as it appears to us to be called for, we publish it now concerning our paper.

Many persons may, for the moment, think that our leaders should have less of reference to ourselves and our project, and more of direct application to general building affairs; but it would ill become us to sit down, gravely assuming that we are fairly out at sea, when we are merely launched from the slips, and require all hands to assist in the equipment; or, to come nearer home for our similitudes, it would be as absurd as the conduct of one who would engage in trimming the slates for the roof, or cutting out his chimney tops, when his time and attention are imperatively called for in laying out and putting in his foundation. Our foundation is not yet completed, but the site is good, the aspects agreeable and promising, and we, as the architects of the work, beg to make our weekly report.

Those who are not in the secret of such matters will be surprised when we tell them of the smallness of our sale—those who are in the secret are astonished it should be so large. Eight hundred papers of Number II. have been purchased by our London friends, and about half that number have been called for in the country. O'Brien, of Dublin, sent for two hundred and fifty of the precursor number at the first venture; but he knows a good deal of the building class, and he has had two hundred of Number II. The blame, however, if blame there be, of our not having a larger sale, rests with ourselves. We have not advertised; or, at any rate, in not more than a dozen papers; we have not, or hardly at all, resorted to the ordinary means of putting, as it is called, but perhaps, more properly speaking, proclaiming ourselves; and for this we have been reproved by several of our friends. The note of preparation say they, should have been sounded for weeks beforehand; the public eye literally offended at every turn by "big black placards"; the advertising columns of our contemporaries encumbered with advertisements. Yet hardly one of these have we done, or could do, without some compromise of our position, or the tying of our hands. We said in the precursor number that our reliance was not on the levianth power of capital; we now repeat it, and add, that it is on the infinitely greater power of candour and of truth-telling. We have had the offer of capital, but it was, as we have said, on conditions to which, if we had subscribed, we should have been unworthy of the honourable and dignified part that we aspire to fill. We do not blame our sutors in this respect, the temptations of avarice have been and are still rife in the highways of this crowded city, and are hard to be resisted. Our poor virtue and still poorer talent are things of small account, but yet, like the honour of the lowliest peasant girl, are not to be bartered for money. Our project has been regarded with various eyes; by some as of such promise as to excite the lust of possession, and by such, our honour has been cheapened; by others as a thing for us to build up, roof in, perhaps finish

to the turning of the key, and then, calculating on the necessities which the expenditure and exertion may cause us, that they may step in to occupy at their pleasure, and our sacrifice; others, again, guided by an iron rule, under which they take their stand, and which iron rule is constantly eating and rusting down into the shoulders that so mechanically bear it, decline to admit on any terms until we shall have grown up to their measure and strength; and when we want assistance, refuse; when we want it not, obtrude it with a lavish hand; but how can we blame them? Confidence has been abused (perhaps by reason of her own blindness), suspicion has been engendered, and this state of things is working like a morbid or maniacal passion, feeling itself—suspicion begets suspicion—and the fear—the timid, pained fear—of going wrong, prevents the progress of thousands in the path of right.

But this shall not, we pray that it may not, operate upon ourselves. Our calculations have been made in all the prudence we could command to our aid, in all the far-seeing of our vision. We put forth the Precursor as our "feelers"; we planned it so that it should lie before the public for a few weeks, telling its own tale, and trusting to its merits (if any) to produce that evidence of encouragement for us to proceed, which coming from ten sensible spirits was as good as from ten thousand. But see how it would or might have worked, had we adopted a different mode of procedure. Suppose we had presumed mightily upon our own judgment, and, backed by a powerful purse, had taken the public by storm, giving them no time, nor alternative of reflection. "Will ye, all ye,"—you must have it! proclaimed ourselves as the best public instructors, our paper as the best public organ, vaunted of a circulation which we had forced, and so on; what proof would a success founded upon such a glittering and-bed as all this have supplied? Why, only one to the many other instances described under the old adage, "Soon ripe, soon rotten."

However, we have astonished many, that with such a denial to ourselves as we have related, 800 papers should have been sold in London alone. They refer to other works of a somewhat similar character, which, after several weeks' existence, and the aid of all the "forcing system," have not attained a larger sale than this, of our second, or as it might with full propriety be termed, our first week, seeing that the Precursor was little more than a mere advertiser.

And we, if not astonished, are perfectly satisfied. We know that we could name half-a-dozen building firms in London, who employ probably 3,000 or 4,000 men, and it is not too much to suppose that of these men alone, one-half will ultimately become the readers and supporters of our publication, since it must be assumed that these leading firms employ none but the best, and therefore the most intelligent workmen. We know that in what may be called the London district, there are from 20,000 to 30,000 members of the building crafts; and to say that one in five of these should be our readers and students, would perhaps not be saying too much. We know that in Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, and such large towns, the numbers of the builders are so great, as that each place could, if properly disposed, support our work of itself. We know all this, and that thousands will ultimately make our cause their own, as in fact it is, and as we would have it—thousands for the hundreds now, ay, and for the tens—but yet we are not

so unreasonable, so wildly sanguine, as to suppose that this conclusion is to be jumped to at once. We are satisfied; and inasmuch as this public approbation is gratifying to our hearts, we are deeply and sincerely thankful.

And we should have hearts of stone, or beads of wood, if we were not so. On every side there pour in the most pleasing testimonials—from the remote and obscure quarters into which our paper by some curious accident has found its way—subscribers in the lofty stations, and in the lowliest. For ten long years this opportunity has been yearned for by us; we longed to open this grand commencing book; our hand, has diffidently touched the clasp at last; the page is unfolded, and we read delighted what in our dreams alone we had before read and written.

It is not in any ostentation of humility that we tell of our misgivings; we know full well that there are many who, in regard of their gifts and acquirements, are much more fitted than ourselves to discharge the duty which this work imposes; but the engagements of business, the turn of their inclinations, and it may be, that being also our superiors in modesty, prevent it. A paramount obligation, superior to its suggestions to all the under-whispers of a love of retirement, spurs loudly and imperatively to our ears. The post was vacant, it appeared to us wrong that it should be so, and we have stepped forward, we trust with becoming humility, as well as a becoming confidence, to fill it.

One word as to some prudential suggestions in reference to our saying so much. "Tell the truth," says one friend; "but what need of telling the whole truth? you will only stimulate competition, by the display of the merits and advantages of your case." But this is our answer: Let competition come; so that it come in the guise of a better service to the public, we care not, and we leave the matter in the hands of the builders and our readers. If any one steps forward prepared to do more, and to do it better than ourselves, and the public think that his merits in that respect are not outweighed by any piratical audacity, then we say, let them support him, as we ourselves are prepared to do; but he must bid high if he has more of honest zeal to offer, and if he has that more, he will hesitate between the considerations of public duty and private injustice.

No, we have no fear—we know that this paper is calculated to be one of the best properties of its class, and we stand as the public trustees, prepared and resolved to give our friends the full benefit of these our exertions in supporting it. Let them put it on a sale of 5,000 weekly copies, and look for the evidence in the increased attraction and usefulness of the work; but we know it will not stop at five, nor ten thousand; nor in any measure of utility and value, short of the best publication of the day. Let the builders and the builders' friends look to it,—the matter is for the most part in their own hands.

## OUR CORRESPONDENCE.

WE put at the head of the extracts which we think it necessary to give this week, the letter of a working man, because he holds out the hand in the right spirit, calling upon those of the wealthier ranks of society, not in the language of adulation on the one hand, nor in that of base servility on the other, to commune with those of his class. Let him and his colleagues take comfort—it is so, and it shall be so. Along with the revival of that genuine spirit of devotion to art which we seek to promote, will of a certainty come that